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THE  
Reasonable Communicant:  
OR, AN  
EXPLANATION  
OF THE  
DOCTRINE  
OF THE  
**Sacrament**  
OF THE  
LORD'S-SUPPER,

In all its Parts, from the  
COMMUNION-SERVICE.

In a Discourse between a  
Minister and one of his *Parishioners*.

*The Eleventh Edition.*

L O N D O N :

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# THE PREFACE.

**H**AVING been often call'd upon, both by my Office, and the Rules of Charity, to assist good People, who were willing to understand and to do their Duty, in their Preparation for the Sacrament; I never failed of explaining the latter Part of the Church Catechism, which relates to the Lord's Supper, by the Communion-Service, and recommending it to their frequent Reading, and most serious Meditation; as well knowing that it contain'd the Whole of what the Church of England requires from her Communicants, both to understand and practise: And being moreover assured, that whoever will speak on this Subject, with Authority and Certainty, must speak from thence, it being the Publick and allow'd Explanation of that Doctrine, and the very Standard by which all other Explanations are to be measured, and accordingly to be either admitted or rejected.

To save my self the Labour of very frequently repeating these things, I thought of putting them together, in as short and plain a Method as I could, and printing them, that I might have them to offer easily to such as should think fit to advise with me, on these Occasions.

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Whilst I was thus digesting these things, and putting them in order, there occur'd to my Mind (and naturally I thought) some few Particulars, which, although they are not absolutely necessary to the understanding the Doctrine of the Sacrament, yet I believed they might prove useful to some sort of Christians; and therefore I thought it not unreasonable to intermix them in their proper places; having found in the Course of my Experience, that many People had made the same Objections, and asked the same Questions, and therefore that others also might be glad enough to find such Answers and Solutions as are here given.

The Reader will, undoubtedly, find this little Book, to differ from many that are written on the same Subject; and it would be strange if it should not, for they differ much from one another. But I still refer to the Standard, in all things where that speaks: And where that is silent, I refer to the Reasonableness of what is said by me; having had mine Eye continually upon the Holy Scriptures, and not being destitute of Authorities, for most Particulars, if there had been either need, or use of producing them.

Some, it is likely, will conclude, I have made the Duty seem too easie, and thereby have encouraged both the Careless and the over-busie People of the World, to come to the Lord's Table, with less Preparations than otherwise they would have done. To these People I only say, that I intended nothing like it, and have reason to think that no such thing will follow: Men, I hope, will always come to the Sacrament, with a true Penitent Heart, and lively Faith,

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and then, I am sure, they will come Worthily. And the easier this is to be done, 'tis so much the better, certainly. He who represents a general Duty difficult, does his Master neither Honour nor Service; but discourages many from attempting to perform it, who would both attempt it, and perform it, were it but represented easie in any measure. And 'tis demonstrable, that no Duty suffers more on this Account than that of coming to the Lord's Table; abundance of People not daring to approach it, for the imaginary Difficulties they think attend it, to One who comes with light and mean Apprehensions of it. However, he who represents things fairly, can neither be said to make the duty easie, nor difficult, but to shew it as he finds it.

I have not adventured to subjoin any Devotions, Prayers, or Meditations, to this little Book; as well because I intended it not for the Church, but the Closet; as also because there is such plenty of Books of that kind, as may very well spare any one else that Labour; the generality, indeed, of Writers on this Subject having rather made it their Business to raise the Devotion, than inform and settle the Understanding of their Communicants; in which thing I found no manner of need to follow them.

The Instructions at the end, or Rules of Behaviour, during the Solemnity, are to recommend themselves to the Reader, by their pure Reasonableness and Fitness; for there is no Authority, besides the Rubrick, in such matters, that can enjoin any thing. But I have always thought, that nothing

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external could be more edifying and useful, on these Occasions, than a grave, discreet, and proper Carriage; and have therefore insisted much on some such Particulars, as I thought would be most serviceable to that purpose. For, the truth of it is, we are such weak and imperfect Creatures, that very little matters unfix our Attention, disturb our Prayers, and strangely discompose our Minds, in the midst of our most serious Performances; and therefore every one is to be careful, that he neither disorder himself, or Neighbour, by any thing absurd, unusual, or indecent.

Having given the Reader an Account of these things, I must desire him, in any doubtful Case, not to take my bare Word, but to consult some faithful and Discreet Spiritual Guide, upon the matter, that he may either see Reason to alter his Judgment quite, or stand the more confirm'd in it.

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**Par.** **I** HAVE, Sir, thought upon your last Words, "That it behoved every Christian of Age and Understanding, to come to the *Lord's Supper*, or to provide themselves with such an Excuse as they think will satisfy Christ the Judge, when he shall ask them, at the Last Day, Why they did not comply with that Command of his, the Night before he died, to *Do this in Remembrance of Him*? And the more I think upon it, the less able I am to find out any such Excuse, as, I believe, will satisfy that Judge. And therefore I resolve to lose no more time, in looking out for an Excuse of my Neglect and Disobedience, but to set about what I believe my Duty, and make Excuses needless. I am indeed of Age more than sufficient, but being of a slow Understanding, and of a very mean Capacity, tho' I have read much upon this subject, I intreat you, in your Instructions, to consider me as one very ignorant, and bringing nothing with me, but a Desire to learn, and do what I am bound to do.

**Min.** I am very glad it hath pleased God to bring to your Mind what I said, and to inspire you with so wholesome a Resolution as this, of setting about your Duty is. Assure your self, you would have lived and died without Excuse, had you neglected it. For this Command of Christ being given to none but the Apostles in Person, will either oblige none else, or necessarily take in all Christians of Age and Understanding: And that the Apostles understood it to oblige all other Christians as well as themselves, appears from the Practice immediately following, (which is always the best expounder of a Law) which was that the Apostles and other Christians met together in Religious Assemblies, and partook alike of the

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Lord's Supper. And that this was the Custom of the Churches, where the Apostles were not present appears from the History of the *Corinthians* abusing this Sacrament, 1 *Corinth.* Chap. xi. as also from the Argument, which S. *Paul*, from the Christians communicating in Bread and Wine, frames, in 1 *Cor.* x. in order to deter them from eating things offered to Idols. Now this communicating, being made by S. *Paul*, in that Argument, a badge of their belonging to Christ, as the eating things offered to Idols was the Token of an Idolater, 'tis plain he supposes all Christians obliged, at time and place convenient, to communicate. And if it had not been, in his time, the Custom for Christians to come to the Lord's Table, his Argument had had no force at all in the 10. Chap. And if it had not been their *Duty* to come to the Sacrament, he should not, in the 11th Chap. have reprov'd them for coming in so irreverent and disorderly manner, but have forbidden their coming at all; for why should they commemorate Christ's Death *unworthily*, and to their great Peril, since there was no Obligation on them to commemorate it at all? Since therefore he bids them *examine themselves*, and come, he knows it absolutely necessary that they should come; and this Necessity could only arise from Christ's Command, given to the Apostles at his last Supper, and repeated to S. *Paul* himself by Christ: From all which, you may see, that all Christians are certainly obliged to come to the Lord's Table, and that no one should exempt himself from obeying this Command whom Christ hath not exempted: Let them, therefore, look well to it, who seldom or never partake of the Lord's Supper. God be thanked, this will be no longer your Fault; and I dare say, it must have been a trouble to you, to have been negligent so long. As to the Instructions you require, I know it is my Duty to do you all the Service I can in that Particular; but what I shall give you will be  
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none of *Mine*, but *the Churches*, of which you are a Member. I do not think I have Authority enough, to say much of my own head, in this great matter; nor will you be any Loser by that, for the Church will say enough, and what it says will be authentical, and of great weight, which is more than I can promise of any private Man, any farther than he agrees with the Church, in her Publick Offices. And for your Understanding, I would not have you distrust it overmuch, for the matter we are upon, requires no subtilty or fine parts; as you may well imagine, when you consider, that this Command of coming to the Lord's Table, obliges *All* Christians, High and Low, Rich and Poor, Learned and Ignorant, and therefore must needs be plain and easie to the meanest Capacities. If therefore you shall know, 1st, *What a Sacrament is.* 2dly, *Why the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was ordained.* 3dly, *What are the Benefits whereof we are made partakers thereby.* And lastly, *What is required of them who come to the Lord's Supper*, you will know all that you need to know, and all that the Church requires of you. And this you are to learn from the Church Catechism, and the Communion Service, which as it is the plainest and the easiest, so it is, doubtless, the safest Method of Instruction, and what you may most depend upon.

*Par.* I see a great deal of Reason in what you say, and a great deal of Security in following the Churches Directions, and will therefore seek for no other help, for Information of my Judgment and Understanding; tho' I may perhaps have recourse to other Help for expressing my wants in prayer, and raising my Devotion. Let me therefore know, 1st, *What you mean by the word Sacrament?*

*Min.* I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual Grace, given unto us: Ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof. So that  
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there are two Parts in a Sacrament, *an outward and visible Sign*, something that you can see, and something signified [which you cannot see, that is to say, *an inward and spiritual Grace*, which God gives to us. And this outward and visible Sign is instituted and *ordained by Christ himself*, as a means by which we receive this inward and spiritual Grace; it is the Instrument or Conduit, thro' which the Grace of God is conveyed and derived to the Souls of Men. And moreover this outward and visible Sign is *as a Pledge* to assure us of that inward Grace, that is to say, we are as sure to receive this inward and spiritual Grace, if qualified as Christ requires, as we receive the outward and visible Sign. And, since it is the same Christ who instituted the outward Sign, who is to bestow this inward Grace, the duly partaking of the outward Sign must needs be as a pledge to assure us that we shall receive that inward and spiritual Grace. Thus, for Instance in the Sacrament of Baptism there are two things. First, *The outward and visible Sign or Form, which is Water, wherein the Person is baptized, in the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, instituted by Christ. 2dly, *The inward and spiritual Grace, which is a Death unto Sin, and a new Birth unto Righteousness, for being by Nature born in Sin, and the Children of Wrath, we are, by being baptized, made the Children of Grace.* Here the outward and visible Sign, or the being baptized in Water, in the Form prescribed, is the *Means*, by which the Party baptized (if rightly qualified by Faith and Repentance) receives the Grace of having his Sins forgiven, and of being adopted one of God's Children. And his being thus baptized, is *a Pledge* to assure him of receiving the Forgiveness of his Sins, and being made a Child of God, and Partaker of all the Grace and Favour that belongs to the Relation of a Son.

*Par.* But may I not here enquire, whether the *Death unto Sin, and New birth unto Righteousness*, before  
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mentioned, do not intimate the Conditions upon *Man's* Part, on which he enters into Covenant with God, in Baptism?

*Min.* Every one indeed who is baptized, does thereby engage and stipulate, to die to Sin, and to live to God; that is, to cease from Sin, and live a Life of Righteousness. But the Grace of Baptism, is something bestowed and promised by God on his part, and therefore a *Death unto Sin*, does here signify the Pardon of past Sins to him who is duly baptized; and a New Birth unto Righteousness, is the Promise of God's Grace to assist the baptized in living righteously for the Time to come. For every one who is duly qualified, by Faith and Repentance, to come to Baptism, and is duly baptized in the matter and manner prescribed by Christ, is actually forgiven all his past Sins, and in a state of Grace, and regenerated by the Holy Spirit. And yet after Baptism he is also obliged to die to Sin, and to live to God, *to crucify the old Man, continually to mortify all his evil and corrupt Affections, and daily to proceed in all Virtue, and Goodliness of living.* We are by Nature born in Sin, and Children of Wrath, that is, under God's Displeasure; but being baptized, we are made Children of Grace; that is, our past Sins are forgiven, and we are put under God's Favour, and we engage in that Covenant to continue so; which cannot be, but by dying to Sin, and living to Righteousness, for the Time to come, which, without God's Grace, cannot be done by any of us.

*Par.* I am very well satisfied with what is said; and, if you please, would now come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; in which I suppose, there must be also two things, the outward and visible Sign, and the inward and spiritual Grace, the thing signified. *What is the outward part, therefore, or Sign of the Lord's Supper?*

*Min.* *Bread and Wine, which the Lord hath commanded to be received;* that is, to be eaten and drunk by all such as come to this Table.

*Par.*

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Par. *What is the inward part or thing signified by this Bread and Wine?*

Min. *The Body and Blood of Christ, which are verily and indeed taken, and received by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper?*

Par. I can easily understand, that the Bread broken, should signifie the body of Christ broken on the Cross; and that the Wine poured out, should signifie the Blood of Christ, shed at his Crucifixion: But in good truth, I cannot comprehend how this Body and Blood should be *verily and indeed taken and received by the Faithful in the Lord's Supper*: Those Words sound as if we were to eat the Natural Body, and drink the Natural Blood of Christ; I tell you, Sir, these Words puzzle all plain People; what must I do with them, and how must I understand them?

Min. The Church of *England*, in the last Rubrick of the Communion-Service, declares, that *the Natural Body and Blood of Christ are in Heaven, and not here; it being against the truth of Christ's Natural Body, to be, at one time, in more places than One*. And therefore must declare, that we cannot eat and drink Christ's Natural Body and Blood, in the Sacrament; so that *the Real Presence*, maintained by the Church of *England*, is not the Presence of Christ's Natural Body, but of his Spiritual and Mystical one; that is, the Real Presence of Christ's invisible Power and Grace, so *in and with* the Elements of Bread and Wine, as to convey spiritual and Real Effects to the Souls of such as duly receive them; as the Church is called the *Body of Christ*, because of his Spirit quickning and enlivening the Souls of Believers. And so the Church of Christ did heretofore pray, in the Prayer of Consecration, *That the Spirit of God, coming down upon the Elements of Bread and Wine, might make them the Body and Blood of Christ, so that they who received them, might be filled with the Grace of his Spirit*. Now the closest and the nearest Union of the Spirit of God, with the

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the Elements of Bread and Wine, that can be imagined, can never make the Natural Body and Blood of Christ; (for if there be but One Natural Body of Christ, nothing else can be that Body :) But the Descent of God's Spirit *upon*, and Union *with*, the Bread and Wine, may make those Elements as communicative of the Grace of Christ, and of the Efficacy of his Spirit, as his Natural Body was, whilst he lived upon the Earth: and this is what the Church requested in that Form of Prayer.

*Par.* What therefore would you have me believe distinctly of this matter?

*Min.* That, after the Consecration, such a Divine Power and Efficacy doth accompany the Holy Sacrament, as makes the *Bread and Wine* become the Spiritual and Mystical Body of Christ. And to assure your self that the Church of *England* knows no Corporal Presence, nor any change of the Elements into the Natural Body and Blood of Christ, you may observe, that in the First Exhortation of the Communion Service, she tells us, That *God did not only give his Son Jesus Christ, to die for us, but also to be our spiritual Food and Sustenance in that Holy Sacrament.* Now Spiritual Food and Sustenance is, doubtless, the Food and Sustenance of the Spirit; because when it is asked, in the Catechism, *What are the Benefits whereof we are made partakers by the Sacrament?* The Answer is, *The strengthening and refreshing of our Souls, by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our Bodies are by the Bread and Wine:* Whereas, if the Natural Body of Christ were in the Sacrament, what should hinder it from being as much the Natural Food and Sustenance of our Bodies, as any other Meat and Drink in the World? And so, in the Third Exhortation, we are told, That, *if with a true penitent Heart, and lively Faith, we receive that Holy Sacrament, then we spiritually eat the Flesh of Christ, and drink his Blood.* Now to eat and drink *spiritually*, is a figurative Expression, and signifies,



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signifies, *the Feeding upon Christ's Body with our Heart, by Faith*: and so the Church explains it when the Minister delivers the Bread to the Communicant, as you may see in that place. We are therefore as *verily and indeed* filled with the Grace of Christ's Spirit, by duly receiving these Elements, which he calls his Body and Blood; as we should be by eating and drinking his Natural Flesh, and Blood; he calls the Bread and Wine, his Body and Blood, and he makes them so to all Spiritual Intents and Purposes. And farther than this, there is, I think, no going, consistently with the Declarations of the Church of *England*, both in the Office of Communion, and *after* it. To say the Bread and Wine, after Consecration, become the true Natural Body and Blood of Christ, is to destroy the very Nature of the Sacrament, and to make a *Sign* to be the *Thing signified*; for, if the Bread and Wine be transubstantiated into the Body and Blood of Christ, then is the *Sign* lost, because there is no Bread nor Wine remaining: Which is not only contrary to Sense, but to the Definition of a Sacrament, which is made up of an outward and visible *Sign*, as well as of an inward and spiritual Grace. As therefore, in the Sacrament of Baptism, the Water remains still true and natural Water, after its Sanctification to the mystical washing away of Sin; so do the Elements of Bread and Wine remain still true and natural Bread and Wine, after the Consecration of them, to the End and Use appointed by Christ our Saviour. But as in Baptism, the Water, when sanctified to that peculiar Use, and used in the manner prescribed by Christ, differs from other common Water, in that it is made, by Christ's Blessing and Appointment, the Instrument and Means by which he conveys Forgiveness of Sins past, to the truly faithful Penitent, and regenerates him to Newness of Life, for the Time to come: so in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the Elements of Bread and Wine, after Consecration, differ from other Bread and Wine, in that they are called the Body and Blood



of Christ, and the Means and are Instruments by which Christ conveys the Grace of his Spirit to the worthy Communicant. And be assured, my Friend, that you can be no loser by this ; for Bread and Wine (or any Thing else which it had pleased Christ to have chosen) may be, by the Blessing and Appointment of God as communicative of Grace, as the true Natural Flesh and Blood of Christ, it self, can be : For even that (if you could indeed eat it with your Teeth) would no more communicate Grace, or any Blessing, to the Receiver, without such Institution and Appointment of God, than any other Food in the World that you can eat.

*Par.* The Sacraments, therefore, being matters of mere Institution and Appointment, I am concerned to know no more, either what they are, or how they operate, than it hath pleased God to reveal in the Holy Scriptures. And it will be sufficient, you say, to believe, that the Consecrated Elements are both called, and made the Body and Blood of Christ, so *verily and indeed*, to all Spiritual Intents and Purposes, as to convey to the Faithful Receiver whatever Grace and Blessing Christ hath annex'd to the due Performance of these Holy Rites. It is now time to ask : *Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?*

*Min.* For the continual Remembrance of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, and of the Benefits which we receive thereby.

*Par.* I suppose then, that at this time, we are most especially to remember that Christ died for our Sins ; and that the Bread which signifies his Body, and the Wine his Blood, do put us in mind that his Body and Blood, were broken and shed for us upon the Cross. This is a very easie thing, is there any thing else in it?

*Min.* No, nothing else ; Christ, when he instituted this Sacrament, said only, *Do this in Remembrance of Me* : So all the *Evangelists* tell us, and mention no other End of this Institution. And so *St. Paul* repeating what Christ said to himself, 1 Cor. xi. 24,

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25. tell us--that of the Bread he said--*Take, eat, This is my Body, which is broken for you, this do in Remembrance of Me.* And of the Cup--*This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in Remembrance of Me.* And then explains himself in the Verse following, after this manner,--*For as oft as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's Death till he come.* After this it will be no wonder, if the Church of *England* neither declares, nor intimates, any other End or Use of the Institution of the Sacrament, than *the Communion of Christ's Death*; for how should any one know the Will of Christ but by his Words? And what they are, you have seen. But now attend to what the Church says, 1st, In the *First Exhortation* before the Communion-Office. *On such a Day* (says her Officer) *I purpose, by God's assistance, to administer to all such as shall be religiously and devoutly disposed, the most comfortable Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, to be by them received, in Remembrance of his Meritorious Cross and Passion; whereby alone we obtain Remission of our Sins, and are made Partakers of the Kingdom of Heaven.* Then, in the *Second Exhortation*: *And as the Son of God did vouchsafe to yeild up his Soul by Death upon the Cross, for your Salvation; so is it your Duty to receive the Communion, in Remembrance of the Sacrifice of his Death, as he himself hath commanded.* And in the *Third Exhortation*, thus: *And to the end that we should always remember the exceeding great Love of our Master and only Saviour Jesus Christ, thus dying for us, and the innumerable Benefits which by his precious Blood-shedding he hath obtained to us, he hath instituted and ordained Holy Mysteries, as Pledges of his Love, and for a Continual Remembrance of his Death, to our great and endless Comfort.* And so in the Prayer of Consecration:--*Who did institute, and in his Holy Gospel command us to continue a perpetual Memory of that his precious Death, until his coming again.* And three or four

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four lines after,-- *According to thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ's holy Institution, in Remembrance of his Death and Passion.* And when the Minister delivers the Bread to each Communicant, he says, *Take, and eat this, in Remembrance that Christ died for thee.* And of the Cup, *Drink this in Remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee.*

*Par.* Since, then, the Scriptures, the Church Catechism, and the Communion-Office, speak of no other End of Christ's instituting the Sacrament, than for the Remembrance of his Death, I need not be concern'd either to inquire after any other End, or to believe there is any other, whatever private People may offer in their Discourses on this Subject.

*Min.* You take me right: There is no other End declared by Christ, nor by the Church of *England*, of the Institution of the Sacrament, than to come to his Table, to take and eat Bread, and drink Wine, (made to the Faithful Receiver Christ's Body and Blood) in Remembrance of Christ's Death and Sufferings; but this must not hinder you from doing all that is previous and necessary to qualify you to commemorate this precious Death *worthily*.

*Par.* That I apprehend: Nor must I commemorate this Death, barely as the Death of Christ, but as he was a *Sacrifice for Sin*; that is, if I understand it right, his Life was offered up to God, upon the Cross, for the Expiation of the Sins of the World, and for the Attonement of God's Anger; just as the Lives of Beasts were, under the *Mosaical* Dispensation, offered for the Expiation of such and such Offences, upon which the Party offending was acquitted of whatever legal guilt he had contracted. When therefore I commemorate the Death of Christ, I must remember, not only that he died, but that his Life was offered up to God a *Sacrifice*, and was accepted of him for the Sins of the whole World. This the Scripture assures us of, in many places; and this the Church expresses in the Prayer of Consecration, thus; *That God, of his ten-*  
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*der Mercy, gave his only Son Jesus Christ, to suffer Death upon the Cross for our Redemption, who made there (by his one Oblation of himself once offered) a full, perfect, and sufficient Sacrifice, Oblation, and Satisfaction, for the Sins of the whole World. This I understand, by commemorating Christ's Death as a Sacrifice, or the Sacrifice of Christ's Death; and I hope this is sufficient; for I do not care, in how small a Compass my Belief lies, provided it be all that is truly necessary.*

*Min.* You have read the Communion-Service well, and made good use of it; and indeed you need to go no farther: For all you have to do, is to remember and believe, that Christ died, and that his Life was offered up a Sacrifice to God, for the Forgiveness of the Sins of all the World, and was sufficient for that Purpose.

*Par.* But what are the Benefits whereof we are made Partakers by receiving this Sacrament: for tho' I come to it, because commanded, and do there (as I am also bid) commemorate the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, yet what advantage is it, so to commemorate Christ's Death?

*Min.* The Benefits of Christ's Death are numberless and inestimable; it is the Fountain and Foundation of all God's Mercies, which he either bestows on Men in this Life, or promises in the other. And, doubtless, the Benefits of duly commemorating this Death, are also very great: and therefore the Church's Answer to this Question, is—*The strengthening and refreshing of the Soul by the Body and Blood of Christ, as our Bodies are by the Bread and Wine.* The Death of Christ is as much the Life of the Soul, as Bread and Wine are the Life and Sustenance of the Body. Bread, you know, is the Staff of Life, and Wine is that which cheareth the Heart of Man, and supporteth his Spirit; and they are put here to signify the Whole Sustenance of Man's Life: As therefore a Man's Body cannot be supported and maintain'd with



with Strength and Vigor, without the Sustainance of Bread and Wine; so does the Life of the Soul consist in Faith on the Son of God, and would, without it, languish away and die. These, you see, are figurative Expressions, and must be so, by reason the Soul cannot properly be said, either to *eat* or *drink*. But it is easie enough to understand, that as Man's Body lives by Meat and Drink, so does his Soul by Faith in God, and Hope in his Promises; and that, as when the Body is faint and languishing, it is supported and revived by Bread and Wine; so is the Soul of a poor penitent Offender (when fainting under the weight of its Guilt) strengthened, refreshed and quickned again to Life, by remembring what Christ has suffered for his sake, how he died to redeem his Soul, to make Satisfaction to God for all his Sins, and reconcile him to him. And therefore to commemorate the Benefits of Christ's Death, must needs be the Refreshment, Comfort and Support of a Man's Spirits, and the very Life of his Soul. But you will have a fuller View of all these spiritual advantages, by reading the second Prayer, after the receiving of the Sacrament, wherein the Communicants give Thanks to God (by the Mouth of the Minister) *for that he vouchsafes to feed those, who have duly received those holy Mysteries, with the Spiritual Food of the most Precious Body and Blood of Christ, and doth assure them thereby of his Favour and Goodness towards them, and that they are every Members incorporate in the Mystical Body of his Son; which is the blessed Company of all Faithful People; and are also Heirs, through Hope of his everlasting Kingdom, by the Merits of the most precious Death and Passion of his dear Son.* In which Words the Church numbers up the Benefits that accrue to the worthy Receiver. *1<sup>st</sup>*, They are fed with the spiritual Food of Christ's Body and Blood *2<sup>dly</sup>*, They are assured, thereby, of God's Favour and Goodness towards them. *3<sup>dly</sup>*, They are Members of Christ's Mystical Body, *i. e.* the Church, of which Christ



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Christ is the Head : And, *4thly*, Heirs of Salvation. Now though we are made in Baptism, Members of Christ, Children of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, yet was it for the Merit of Christ's Death and Sufferings that God was pleased to enter into Covenant with us in Baptism, and thereby give us Right to all those Benefits and Privileges. And therefore we have seen that the Sacrament was ordained for the Commemoration of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, and for Commemoration of the Benefits that we receive by that Death : and the Commemoration of these Benefits are, in truth, the strengthening and refreshing of the Soul, as Peoples Bodies are refreshed by Bread and Wine. To think, remember, and believe, that by duly receiving these blessed Elements of Bread and Wine, we are fed with the spiritual Food of Christ's Body and Blood, that we are thereby assured of God's Favour, Members of Christ's Church, and Heirs through Hope of everlasting Salvation ; to remember, I say, these Honours and Advantages, must strengthen and refresh the Soul of humble Sinners, as much as Bread and Wine can do their Bodies. You must bear with the Repetition of these matters, in order to your better understanding them, and their being the better impressed on your Mind.

*Par.* I thank you, Sir, and perceive I am no Loser by the frequent inculcating of the same thing. Let me, now, if you please, give you a short Summary of what you have discoursed of, that you may see, whether I have understood and taken you right. " I find my  
 " self indispensibly obliged, by Christ's Command, to  
 " come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and I  
 " do not see what can excuse me from doing so, being  
 " of Age and Understanding, and having convenient  
 " opportunity. When I come there, I am to do as Christ  
 " bad his Disciples do, take the Elements of Bread  
 " and Wine, and eat the one, and drink the other, in  
 " Commemoration of Christ's Death. The Bread,

I understand, is by appointment of Christ, to signify his Body, and the Wine his Blood; and when I eat the Bread, I am to remember that Christ's Body was cruelly used, nailed to the Cross, wounded and pierced. And when I drink the Wine, I am to remember that his Blood was shed and poured out upon that Cross. This Death of Christ, I am to look upon as an Expiatory Sacrifice, which he offered up to God upon the Cross, for the Sins of all Mankind, and for mine in particular amongst the rest, if I take care to qualify myself as he requires. This Bread and Wine thus blessed and consecrated to this particular Use, I am not, you say, to consider as common Bread and Wine; nor yet to think they are at all changed in their Nature; but to call them the Body and Blood of Christ, and to believe they will (if worthily received) convey to me the Benefits of Christ's Death and Passion. This *Virtual* Presence of Christ's Body and Blood I can understand, and it is *Real* as to all Spiritual Intents and Purposes; for God, I am sure, can as well convey his Grace to my Soul, and make me Partaker of the Benefits of Christ's Death by these Elements, which, being blessed, signify and represent his Body and Blood, as by his Natural Flesh and Natural Blood, if I could eat the one, and drink the other. Farther than this, I am glad to hear you think the Church of *England* does not go. But since all these great Advantages and Spiritual Benefits accrue only to him who comes to this Table of the Lord, *duly and worthily prepar'd*, it is most necessary that I ask, in the last place—*What is requir'd of them who come to the Lord's Supper?*

Min. *To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former Sins; stedfastly purposing to lead a new Life, have a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Christ, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and be in Charity with all Men.*

Par.

## 20 *The Reasonable Communicant.*

Christ is the Head : And, 4<sup>thly</sup>, Heirs of Salvation. Now though we are made in Baptism, Members of Christ, Children of God, and Inheritors of the Kingdom of Heaven, yet was it for the Merit of Christ's Death and Sufferings that God was pleased to enter into Covenant with us in Baptism, and thereby give us Right to all those Benefits and Privileges. And therefore we have seen that the Sacrament was ordained for the Commemoration of the Sacrifice of Christ's Death, and for Commemoration of the Benefits that we receive by that Death : and the Commemoration of these Benefits are, in truth, the strengthening and refreshing of the Soul, as Peoples Bodies are refreshed by Bread and Wine. To think, remember, and believe, that by duly receiving these blessed Elements of Bread and Wine, we are fed with the spiritual Food of Christ's Body and Blood, that we are thereby assured of God's Favour, Members of Christ's Church, and Heirs through Hope of everlasting Salvation ; to remember, I say, these Honours and Advantages, must strengthen and refresh the Soul of humble Sinners, as much as Bread and Wine can do their Bodies. You must bear with the Repetition of these matters, in order to your better understanding them, and their being the better impressed on your Mind.

*Par.* I thank you, Sir, and perceive I am no Loser by the frequent inculcating of the same thing. Let me, now, if you please, give you a short Summary of what you have discoursed of, that you may see, whether I have understood and taken you right. " I find my  
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Min. *To examine themselves, whether they repent them truly of their former Sins; stedfastly purposing to lead a new Life, have a lively Faith in God's Mercy through Christ, with a thankful Remembrance of his Death, and be in Charity with all Men.*

*Par.*

## 22 *The Reasonable Communicant.*

*Par.* A great Work, I assure you, if every thing be consider'd particularly.

*Min.* Be not frightned ; it is no more than what all Christians are always obliged to, as well when they come not to the Sacrament, as when they come to it.

*Par.* What is it, *truly to repent of all my former Sins?*

*Min.* I will tell you, in the Words of the Church, in her *First Exhortation*. It is, *to examine your Life and Conversation by the Rule of God's Commandments: And whereinsoever you shall perceive your self to have offended, either by Will, Word, or Deed, there to bewail your own Sinfulness, and confess your self to Almighty God, with full purpose of Amendment.* Nothing can possibly be plainer. You must bethink yourself, how you have spent your Life past, and what Commands of God you have transgressed, and what you have neglected ; what you have done which was forbidden by God, and what you have not done which was commanded. This, your Conscience (if you be in earnest) will, upon some short Reflection, bring to memory : And, for this, you must implore God's mercy, and beseech him for Christ's sake to forgive to you.

*Par.* Is it enough, then, to confess my Sins to God, and to be unfeignedly concern'd and sorrowful for having offended him ? Is this to have repented ?

*Min.* You must remember, that our Sins are against God, and against our Neighbour : And that Repentance implies not only *Sorrow* for Sin, but an Endeavour to *undo*, as far as we can, whatever we have done amiss. Now in all Sins that are so done, as nothing of them can be undone, nor any amends made for them, there to *confess them*, and *besorrow for them*, is sufficiently to repent of them, because it is *all* that a Man can do ; where a Man can do more, more will be expected from him ; for Repentance is the undoing, as much as we can, what we have done amiss. And, if you re-



member this, you will easily see, what Repentance will suffice for almost all Sins. It is therefore for such Sins (whether against God, or Man, or both) as cannot be undone, nor other Amends made for them, that the Church calls upon you, *to bewail them, and confess your self to God, with full purpose of Amendment.* But for other Offences, the Church directs you otherwise. *If (saith she) you shall perceive your Offences to be such, as are not only against God, but also against your Neighbours, then you shall reconcile your self unto them, being ready to make Restitution, and Satisfaction, according to the utmost of your Power, for all Injuries and Wrongs done by you to any other; and being likewise ready to forgive others that have offended you, as you would have forgiveness of your Offences at God's hands.*

*Par.* But what if I am able to make no Restitution, or Satisfaction at all, for the Injury I have done my Neighbour? Must I not come to the Sacrament, provided I acknowledge and confess my Sin to God, and promise, in my Mind, to make Amends, whenever I am able?

*Min.* Yes certainly; for this is all the Repentance you can shew, under your Inability of making Satisfaction; and such a Resolution of being Just and Honest, is sufficient, till you are able to put it in Execution.

*Par.* But, supposing I have wrong'd a Man, (as, for Instance, my Master, when I was his Servant, and trusted by him) by defrauding him of Goods, or Money, or any thing valuable, and am now convinced of my Fault in doing so, and would make him Restitution if I could, but find I am not able; Am I obliged to confess my Fault to him, before I come to the Sacrament? Does Repentance certainly include Confession to the *Party injured*? The Case, I doubt, is common; but I know it was my own Case, certainly; And what would you advise in it?

*Min.*

*Min.* If your Confession would do your Master, or any one else, any Service, I would not only *advise* it, but *injoin* it to you. As for Example: If your Confession would shew your Master some particular Cases where his Servants, or others whom he trusts, may over-reach or defraud him, of which he is not aware, and understands not, there, you see, your Confession would be of use to him, and preserve him from other Injuries; and there, I would advise you, to give him information, that he may be more secure for the future. But this may be done underhand, and in generals, without discovering your self, and your particular Frauds; because, as the Case may happen, such Discovery may do him no Service, and your self much Mischief; and where no good can come to the Party injured by a Confession, there I can see no need of it.

*Par.* May I also make Restitution, when I am able, without discovering my Name, to the Party injur'd?

*Min.* You may, where the Injury done is fully satisfied by Restitution. As for Example—You have wrong'd such a one of Fifty Crowns, or to the Value of that Sum; the Injury here, is the loss of so much Money; when therefore this Loss is made up, the Injury is removed; what good would it do, to let the Party know, *who* it was that wronged him? It might do you some Mischief, but I think it could do him no Servic. If he suspected and impleaded you at Law, and you were cast, you would be obliged to pay the Costs, and also to confess your Fault; because you would, here, clear your Adversary of false Accusation, and justify the Sentence of your Judges, which is a great good to the Common-wealth.

*Par.* I see the Reason of what you say. But what was the other Case, where I should be obliged to confess my secret Fraud, though I could not, at that time, make Restitution?

*Min.*

## *The Reasonable Communicant.* 25

*Min.* If your Master did either publicly accuse, or very strongly suspect another Person, of doing him that Wrong, which you indeed did him; here you would be obliged to clear that innocent Person, and free him from the Trouble and Injury of being falsely accused, or ill thought of; and also your Master would be freed from doing Injury, by falsely accusing, or unjustly suspecting an innocent Person. Here you perceive, you would do justice and a great deal of good, by your Discovery and Confession. But in cases where no good would come, but Mischief, by Confession of your Fault to the injured Party, there, I imagine, you may rest satisfied with Confession to God, and a Purpose of Restitution, when you are able.

*Par.* I thought Confession had been always necessary; but I perceive, that where it would answer no good end, there it may be better spared, and without Sin. And therefore, let me put the Case, that I had polluted my Neighbour's Bed, and thereby injured three Parties most notoriously; *Him, His Wife, and My own*: I must not, by this Rule, confess my Offence to them.

*Min.* Consider how much Mischief such a Confession might do to your Neighbour, and to your own Wife, and how little Good; and then you will see the Reason of the Rule. You would break the Peace and Happiness of two Families during their whole Lives, and, it may be, occasion a world of Mischief, from the Rage of Jealousy, and the Sense of such great Injuries. But mistake me not quite, I discharge you from confessing this Sin either to the Abused Husband, or to your own abused Wife: but I should lay it strictly on you, to confess your Sin to your wicked Partner, and let her know (but with all Secrecy,) how much you are concern'd at your Transgression, and how sincerely you repent of it; and how you wish that she would do so too. This Confession I would never excuse you from, because it would be the likeliest Method to reclaim your sinful Partner, and undo the Mis-

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## 26 *The Reasonable Communicant.*

chief you have done'; and truly, I cannot see how you could repent in earnest of this Sin, without endeavouring to amend those whom you had been so instrumental in corrupting and undoing. And yet, I would excuse you, even from this, if there were manifest danger of the Abused Husband's discovering the Falshood of his Wife, by your Confession. You see, I make the good effects of Confession, to be the Reason of making it; and therefore, where a greater Mischief would probably ensue from it, I cannot think it necessary. But it must then be made to God, with greater Sorrow and Concern, if it be possible.

*Par.* But what if I should have sinned with common Prostitutes, and such as make a Trade of it, and who cannot be presumed ignorant of their Sin?

*Min.* The Case is somewhat otherwise there; and you must judge what likelihood there is of your Advice's succeeding with such People; for where you think they know their way is sinful, and Counsel would have no effect, there I believe you are under no Obligation to give them warning.

*Par.* The Sum therefore of what you say is, I think, this—That Confession and Restitution are the two external Tokens of Repentance—and that the Rule and Measure of Confession (to the Parties injured) is the Benefit and Good that would come by it. And the Rule and Measure of Restitution, is a Man's Ability of making it; so that where mischief, and no Good, would come by Confession, there I may repent without Confession, except to God. And where I am able to make no Restitution, there I may repent sincerely without it; and so may come to the Holy Sacrament, though I have done much Wrong and Injury. I wish I could supply these great Defects, with a proportionable Share of Sorrow for my Sins; can you tell what is proper to excite and raise it in me? for I think I am too cold and unconcerned in this matter.

*Min.* Endeavour to possess your Mind with a true sense of the Heinousness of Sin, by considering, that

God who gave you Life and Being, and made you to be happy, is so displeased with Sin, that he resolves, for its sake, not only to deprive you of the Happiness he intended for you, but to make you miserable beyond Expression, and that for ever, in the World to come. Think with your self *who* Christ the Lord was, and what he hath done and suffered to redeem you from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin; and you will have another kind of Notion and Opinion of the Heinousness of Sin, than you can have, from either its natural Turpitude, or from the Mischief it does in the World, though both those things are considerable. The whole Oeconomy of Christianity were a very strange thing, unless Sin be the most heinous and abominable thing that can be, before God. And therefore when you would work in your self a true sense of the Heinousness of Sin, you must consider what is threatened to it, and what was done by Christ, (the Eternal Son of God) to save you from it.

*Par.* But this kind of Sorrow looks (methinks) rather like Sorrow for the *Effects* of God's Displeasure, which are *Loss* and *Punishment*; than Sorrow for the *Occasion* of that Displeasure, which is *Sin*. I own, Sir, I am very sorry for my Sins, when I consider what a Loser I am like to be by them, and how much I must suffer for them; but this is being sorry wholly for my own sake.

*Min.* Be content, Sir, to do what you can, and as well as you can. It would take up a world of time, to persuade you to be exceeding sorrowful for your Sins, if your Sins would do you no Mischief, and procure you no Punishment.

*Par.* I think so too: But yet I have I know not what kind of Concern about me, that my Sorrow for Sin should proceed from no nobler and better Principle than the Fear of Punishment. And you must know, much better than I, how all sorts of Writers and Discourses decry the Repentance that proceeds from *Fear* *Punishment*.



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*Min.* Never think of setting up for a Man of Honour in Religion; trust to the Principles that God hath implanted in you, which are, *Hope* and Desire of Good, and *Fear* and Hate of Evil: and trust to the Rules that God hath set you in his holy Word, to guide and direct your self by. If God exhort you to such and such things, and promise you to reward your performance of them, with such and such Blessings, think with your self, whether you may not set about those Actions, in view of those Rewards, and for the sake of those Blessings. If God prohibit you such and such things, and tell you, if you venture on them, he will punish you in this and that manner, think with your self, whether you may not abstain from those things, for fear of being so punished. These are plain things, let them never slip out of your Mind. Nor let the Reverence of any Man (though it were St. *Austin* himself) cause you to forget, that the Scriptures are made up of Promises and Threats, both which would signifie nothing, if Men might not be moved by them both to perform their Duty, and obtain their Remission of Sin, and to avoid both Guilt and Punishment. Nor let the same Promises being made to *Repentance*, which are made to *Innocence* and Obedience, and the same Threatnings denounced to *Impenitence*, which are denounced to Sin and *Wickedness*; 'tis evident, that Men may repent and turn to God upon the same Principles, by which they might have continued innocent and obedient, *viz.* the Promises of Blessings, and the Threats of Mischief, Pain, and Misery; the one to excite their Hope, the other to awaken their Fear, and both to secure their Obedience. But if you can repent upon any better, or (as you call them) nobler Principles, you may. I am only trying to shew you, that the *Repentance* proceeding from *Fear* of *Punishment* is as good, and will be acceptable with God, as being both natural and reasonable. I would have you only distrust the *Fear*, that drives Men from their Duty, not that which urges them to it.

## *The Reasonable Communicant.* 29

*Par.* I can, and do consider Sin, as a thing offensive before God, unworthy of my self, against my Reason and better Knowledge, and against express Command; and upon these Accounts I am somewhat troubled for having committed it; but this Sorrow, I confess, does not rise so high, as the Consideration of the Danger it exposes me to carries it; and therefore I am very glad to hear it is so justifiable and safe; and indeed my Reason cannot disprove any thing you have said in its excuse: I will try henceforwards not to be discouraged by any one's Authority, affirming the contrary, if it be against Reason, and without Scripture; and in the mean time, by the Grace of God, will try to fortify my Resolutions of Obedience and Repentance, with the best Considerations I can, besides the Fear of Punishment. This Sorrow therefore for having offended God, and Restitution, where I am able to make it, and the purpose of making Amends when I am able, will, I hope, include the whole of Repentance of my Sins past. The next thing required of me is, you say, *stedfastly to purpose to lead a new Life*; and that refers to the time to come. The meaning of this is, I imagine, that I resolve in great earnest, to amend in all particulars, wherein I have found my self, upon Examination, faulty. If I have stolen, I will steal no more; if I have been guilty of Lying, Slandering, Swearing, Blaspheming, Drunkenness, Intemperance, and Impurity, I will henceforward study to speak the Truth, and to avoid those Sins, and all occasions of falling into them, and be continually upon my Guard, against all the natural and usual Temptations to them. But what, if when I have made these Resolutions of falling no more into these Sins, I should be so wicked as to brake them? What must I do then? I have reason enough (God knows) to apprehend with fear, that this (which is so common) may be my Case; and with what heart can one, who has often resolved against his Sins, and often broken them deliberately, resolve again to keep them?

### 30 *The Reasonable Communicant.*

*Min.* Assure your self, that you have nothing else to do, in such a Case, but to resolve again, to keep those Resolutions you have often broken. The breach of good Resolutions, is certainly as pardonable as other Sins, and if repented of, will certainly be pardoned and therefore let not your frequent failing, discourage you from attempting again, and again, till you have gain'd your Point. Remember there is nothing else to do; 'tis absolutely necessary you should resolve, until your Resolutions take effect.

*Par.* The third thing requisite, to the coming worthily to the Sacrament, is *to have a lively Faith in God's Mercies through Christ*. What may the Meaning of that be?

*Min.* To believe in great earnest, that God was so exceedingly gracious and merciful to Mankind, that he gave his only Son to die for the Redemption of them, and to purchase the Pardon of all the Sins, of which they shall truly repent and leave.

*Par.* Is it then absolutely necessary, that I, and every one who comes to the Sacrament, should certainly believe, our Sins are forgiven upon Repentance.

*Min.* Not only *at* the Sacrament, but at any other time, whoever truly repents of his Sins, shall certainly, for Christ's sake, be forgiven. The Promise of Forgiveness of Sins is made by God, in Jesus Christ, to Repentance: if therefore you believe you have truly repented, you cannot possibly distrust the Performance of Covenants on God's part. But it is possible you may distrust the Performance of your own part, and the Truth and Sincerity of your Repentance; and then you cannot but distrust the Forgiveness of your Sins on God's part. And that is not want of Faith, nor any Fault; for God only promises Forgiveness to Repentance. As far therefore as you distrust the Sincerity of your Repentance, so far you will distrust your Forgiveness; but you see that such a Distrust charges God with neither want of Truth, nor want of Mercy or Good-

Goodness, and therefore is no way faulty with respect to Him.

*Par.* But may I come to the Sacrament with a Distrust of the truth of my Repentance, since in the First Exhortation I find these Words--*It is requisite, that no Man should come to the Holy Communion, but with a full trust in God's Mercy, and with a quiet Conscience*: Now tho' I have no manner of Distrust of God's Mercy in general, yet if I cannot apply it to my self in particular, how should I have a *Quiet Conscience*? And I can never apply God's Mercy to my self, by Faith, whilst I distrust the Truth and Sincerity of my own Repentance.

*Min.* A *Quiet Conscience* does, indeed, entirely depend upon the *Opinion* a Man has of his Repentance being sincere, and accepted of God: But because a Man may mistake his Case, a *Quiet Conscience* is not always a *secure* state, with respect to God: For, if a Man believe he has repented truly, and yet has not, he is never the nearer Pardon for thinking himself pardoned; and if he be fearful he has not repented as he ought, he may yet have done so, notwithstanding his Fear, and consequently be pardoned of God, although he think he is not pardoned. So that 'tis plain, a Man may have a *Quiet Conscience*, when he is really in great danger; and a *Troubled Conscience*, when he is indeed forgiven, and secure of God's Favour; And you can never believe that God will judge Men finally, by their present Assurance, or Despondency, but by the Truth and the Sincerity of their Repentance. The Church does not therefore understand by a *Quiet Conscience*, a full Assurance in every one, that his Repentance is so perfect and sufficient, that it must certainly be accepted of God; but such a trust in God's Mercy, as that if a Man be duly qualified, he shall be certainly accepted of him, and forgiven. Some Mens Sins may be of such a Nature, as that they shall be sorely perplexed to understand what sort of Repentance is necessary to the obtaining Forgiveness; and, to this end,

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they are call'd upon to advise with their Spiritual Guides, who are presumed to be able to instruct them, and set them right. Others are so overwhelmed with the Sense of their Sins, that they think they are too great for God's Pardon, and these People are also advised to come to their Pastors, that they may learn the true extent of God's Mercies in Jesus Christ, and what it is, will qualifie them for Forgiveness of their Sins. *This is the Quiet Conscience* that the Church requires of her Communicants, a Conscience well inform'd of the Nature of God's Promises and Threats, and of the Nature of Repentance, and of its own State and Condition.

*Par.* If I understand you right, you say, that the *Quiet* of a Man's Conscience depends upon his *Opinion* and Persuasion; but his *Safety and Security* upon his *Practice*; God accepts him, not according to what he *believes* of himself, but according to what he *does*, and truly *is*. If, therefore, upon a serious Examination of my Life past, I find I am in earnest very much concern'd for having offended God, and stedfastly purpose to do so no more, and, by the assistance of his Grace, resolve to lead a new Life for the time to come, and firmly believe that if I do so, God will, for Christ's sake, accept of my Repentance, and enable me more and more to walk carefully before him. If I do thus, I may, you say, come to the Sacrament, although I may be still afraid of the Deceitfulness of my own Heart, and of the Truth and Sincerity of my Repentance, having often broken my good Resolutions before, and fallen again into my old Sins: This fear and doubting of my self will not prejudice me at all. The thing that follows, is, *to bear a thankful Remembrance of Christ's Death*: That is, I suppose, that when I commemorate the Death and Sufferings of Christ, in the Sacrament, I must lift up my Heart to God, and thank him for giving his Son Jesus Christ to die for me: I see a great deal of Reason for so doing, for if he had not died, I must have perished; I



an never therefore remember his Death, without remembering the Deliverance I obtain by it; and as I value that, so I shall certainly be thankful.

*Min.* You say right: Remember by what means you have escaped Death, and shall obtain Life and Happiness everlasting, and that will raise your Gratitude to God, who hath done so great things for you. The Church lays mighty stress upon this Thankful Heart, as there is great Reason, and it will be to your use to observe it—In the first Exhortation—She says, *it is our Duty to render most humble and hearty Thanks to Almighty God our Heavenly Father, for that he hath given his Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, not only to die for us, but also to be our Spiritual Food and Sustenance in that Holy Sacrament.* And in the third Exhortation: *Above all things, you must give most humble and hearty Thanks to God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, for the Redemption of the World, by the Death and Passion of our Saviour Christ, both God and Man.* And at the end of the same—*To him therefore with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, let us give (as we are most bounden) continual Thanks.* And in the Service—the Priest exhorts, *Let us give Thanks unto our Lord God;* and the People answer—*It is meet and right so to do*—So when the Bread is delivered—*Take and eat this, in Remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy Heart by Faith with Thanksgiving.* And when the Cup—*Drink this in Remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful.* And in the Prayers after, We desire of God *that he would mercifully accept our Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving, and heartily thank him for that he does vouchsafe to feed us, &c.* From all which Passages, you will easily conclude, the Lord's Supper to be a *Feast of Joy and Gratitude.* And therefore I should be glad you would come to it, without those Fears and dreadful Apprehensions, that appear so visibly in the Counte-

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tenance and Behaviour of many good devout People, who, I dare say, have no true Cause for such a Concern.

*Par.* I suppose it proceeds from their Humility, and a deep Sense of their Unworthiness, and I hope there is no Harm or Danger in it ; 'tis as like to be my Case as any body's else.

*Min.* No, none at all : I do not blame it, by any means : But if you will be advised by me, you shall endeavour to avoid it ; for Fears distract the Attention, and the Mind is bewildred by them, and considers not the Work it is about, so well as it desires to do. Think, that tho' you are a grievous Sinner, yet God is infinitely merciful ! think, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but be saved : And you are now commemorating that Death that has made Attonement for the Sins of the whole World. These Considerations may dispel all your Fears ; but if they do not, there is no harm in them ; 'twill be your Misfortune to want those Comforts that you might well have ; but there is neither Fault nor danger in wanting them. The Heart is as *secure*, but not as *easy*, under *Fear*, as under *Joy* and good Assurance. Repent but truly of your Sins, and leave them, and the Work is done : the rest is to be left to God, in whose good hands you never will miscarry, how fearful soever you may be of your Condition.

*Par.* God be thanked, that our Safety depends not on our Hopes or Fears, but upon his infinite Goodness, accepting what he himself enables us to do. Let us come, if you please, to *the last Thing* requisite, and that is, *the being in Charity with all Men*. What if my Friend prove false, injurious, and endeavour to undo me ? Must I still trust him, love him, and favour him, as I used to do ? What if he seek to take away my Estate, to hurt my Reputation, or assault my Person ? Must I endure this patiently, and seek no Remedy, but treat him still in the Friendly manner I was wont ?

## *The Reasonable Communicant.* 35

*Min.* No, nothing of all this: Christianity obliges you to hate no Man; to do no Man any Injury; to seek no Revenge: nor to take any, though it might be done with Secrecy and Safety: nay, it obliges you to pray to God for the Forgiveness of such as may have injur'd you in the highest measure, and obliges you to deny them nothing that is due in Justice, in Humanity, and Mercy. Their Enmity and Ill Usage will never excuse you from doing them any sort of good turns that are due to them, as Men or Christians. But this will not hinder you from defending you self from any Injury or Violence, from recovering what is your own, nor from bringing upon them whatever Mischiefe the Laws will inflict upon Transgressors. Christianity will not hinder you from breaking off Friendship with one who has shew'd himself unworthy of it; much less will it require you to continue him in that Confidence and Trust, he has heretofore been in, but forfeited by Falshood and ill Usage. In a word, you must not hate, but you may dislike, any one that injures your Reputation, Fortune, or your Person. You may cease your Friendship, but not your Readiness to do all good Offices: If you have injured any one, you must be reconciled, and make Amends; and if any one has injured you, you must pray to God to forgive them, and so forgive them your self, as to return them no Evil for Evil, nor take any Advantage against them to their prejudice. And if your Adversary be unreasonable, and will not be reconciled to you, 'tis enough that you desire it, and shew your self disposed to it. It would be difficult and endless to tell you, what you should do in as many Cases as may easily happen; if you find your self at a stand, you had best communicate your Case to some prudent and good Spiritual Guide, who will easily tell you what is to be done in the matter. Remember only, that to be on the forgiving side, is Wisdom, and Pleasure, and Superiority, it is to do bravely, and to be a good Christian.

*Par.* And this, you say, is all I have to do.

*Min.*

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*Min.* You see the Catechism says so ; and the first Exhortation before the Communion says so. And so does the Third, which is always read—*Judge therefore your selves, Brethren, that ye be not judged of the Lord—Repent you truly for your Sins past—have a lively and stedfast Faith in Christ, your Saviour—Amend your Lives—and be in perfect Charity with all Men—so shall you be meet Partakers of those holy Mysteries.* And when this Exhortatory Prayer is done—the Church begins again—*Ye that do truly and earnestly repent you of your Sins—and are in Love and Charity with your Neighbours—and intend to lead a new Life, following the Commandments of God, and walking from henceforth in his Holy ways—Draw near with Faith, and take this holy Sacrament to your Comfort.* And, I pray, observe, that there is nothing *Now* required of you, but what you were before obliged to, by virtue of your Baptismal Covenant: And whether you receive the Sacrament or no, you must repent, amend, trust in God's Mercies, and live in Love and Charity with all Men; you must do them *always*, and you are call'd upon especially to do them *now*.

*Par.* You will now give me leave to ask you a few Questions, in the general, and I shall make an end of this Trouble. How much Time must I take to come to the Sacrament prepared, as you have been describing?

*Min.* No certain time can be assigned for that ; and I would not have you scrupulous about it : since this is the first time, you shall do well to examine your Conscience thoroughly, and look carefully back into your Life past, and see wherein you have been faulty, or neglectful ; consider especially the Sins of your Inclination, and those to which your particular Calling, and way of Living, expose you most ; consider well the Temptations that draw you to them : that you may resolve with good assurance against them, for the time to come, as well as truly repent of what is

past.

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past. Do this very well at first; and then, a Sober, Virtuous and Religious Life, will keep you constantly prepared, and fit to come to the Lord's Table. You may take as much time as you please to prepare your self, beforehand, by Reading, Prayer, and Meditation; but I dare not say, that this or that Portion of time, is so necessary to it, as that you shall offend, if you spend it not in those good Exercises. The Church has made no such Rules, but supposes, that if you live like a good Christian, a little time will fit you for the Sacrament. And truly, as you are a Man of Business, do you but say your Prayers constantly, live virtuously, and exercise your Calling honestly and conscientiously, and I do not see but you may be in your Shop on Saturday, and be a good Communicant on Sunday Morning. To be heartily humbled before God for our Sins past, is *an Act of the Mind*. To resolve stedfastly to live better for the time to come, is *an Act of the Mind*. To believe that Christ died for our Sins, and to be thankful to God for that infinite Mercy, are *Acts of the Mind*. And so it is, to forgive all that have injured us. All these preparatory things are *Acts of the Mind*, and quickly performed. And therefore take but care to live well, and you shall always be duly prepared to come to the Communion. And when you consider how frequently the Primitive Christians went to the Sacrament, and yet were *Lawyers, Tradesmen, Merchants*, and followed other Employments, you will conclude that an innocent and virtuous Life must fit one for the Sacrament, without a *Week's*, a longer, or a shorter, sequestration from Company, or Business. I do not say this, to blame any one who takes these courses before the Sacrament, for sometimes it is necessary, and sometimes good and fitting; but that you should not think your self always obliged to take the same course; or abstain from the Sacrament, because you have not had *that* time to spend in holy Exercises. 'Tis a Misfortune, that one can give no

Rules



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Rules that will fit *all* Christians ; and that the best Rules will hurt some or other, if closely followed Discretion is the best Director in the World.

*Par.* Would you have me come to the Sacrament *Fasting*, or may I do otherwise?

*Min.* If you consider the institution, nothing of that kind is necessary, for it was instituted after *Supper*. Nor has the Church of *England* made any Rule about it. Where therefore neither the Laws of God, nor those of our Superiours, have obliged us, we must use our Prudence, and do what we find best. If you find that Fasting makes you more devout and serious, and gives you a better Frame of Mind, you will certainly choose to go to the Sacrament *Fasting*. Or if it be indifferent, and you are much the same whether you fast, or not, and find it makes no Change at all in you, then you will choose to fast in Decency, and with regard to antient Practice. But if you have by Custom contracted such a habit of eating and drinking some light matter every Morning, that you should be uneasy, or disordered without it, then you will choose to do as you use to do ; because the Purposes of Fasting (which are to raise the Mind to God, and put it into a better Frame) are better answered by moderate Refreshment, than by wholly abstaining : I do not suppose that any one makes a full Meal in a Morning, that is not going to strong Labour, much less upon *Sunday*. And I take the Meaning of your Question to be, whether you may eat or drink *never so little*, on the Morning you come to the Sacrament ? And to that I say, that neither God, nor the Church, has appointed the contrary : But yet I would *advise* it, where the Inconveniency of doing it is none ; but not advise it, if there be *any* Inconvenience in abstaining. Only remember, that whether you abstain or not, you do it without scruple yourself, and without censuring what another Person does, tho' contrary to what you do. Do in this, and all other indifferent Cases, what you believe will tend most to your Spiritual Edification your self, without regard to what other People do.

*Par.*

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*Par.* Will you give me any particular Direction how to behave my self during the Solemnity?

*Min.* When the *Offertory* begins, open your *Common-Prayer Book*, and with your Eye (not *Voice*) read along with the Minister, and make what short Application you can to your self, of what is read; there you will find you are reminded of being *Charitable*, in general, to all that stand in need; and, in particular, of being *just* to those who are your Spiritual Guides; and giving them, at least, what the Laws and Customs of the Place have allotted them. And if you find you have been wanting either in this Charity or Justice, you will resolve to make up those Defects, for the time to come; for, assure your self, you will be highly unjust, if you detain from them what is their due, both in Law and Conscience, as much as any Debt is due to your self. When these Sentences are over, then follows the *Prayer for the whole Estate of Christ's Church*, with which you must be sure to join, in Heart and Spirit; and never pretend to use any other Prayers or Meditations of *your own*, or out of *any other Book*, whilst the Minister is praying the Prayers of *the Church*; for these are the best and properest for the present purpose, and you must join with the Congregation in their Attention, and say the *Amen* with them, that you may reap the Advantage of that common Fervency, with which those Prayers fly up to God; when this Prayer is done, then follows the *Exhortation*, (which I have still called the *Third Exhortation*) to which you must most seriously attend, for it is full of excellent Information and Instruction: it shews you the great Benefits of coming *worthily*, that is, (*with a true penitent heart, and lively Faith*) unto this holy Sacrament: And the great danger of coming *unworthily*, that is, without repenting of Sins, and without trusting in God's Mercies through Christ. And pray remember, that there is no other Sense of the Words, *worthily* and *unworthily*, than coming *with*, or *without*

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out Faith in Christ, and sincere Repentance of Sin; And that whoever comes *worthily*, that is, repenting truly of his Sins, and believing that God for Christ's sake, will certainly forgive all such as repent and leave their Sins—whoever comes thus, comes *worthily*, and whoever comes *worthily*, receives the *Benefits of Christ's Body and Blood*, and *dwells in Christ*, and *Christ in him*, and is *one with Christ*, and *Christ with him*, whatever those Phrases signify, and whether you understand them thoroughly or no. And, to your Comfort, moreover, whoever comes *worthily*, escapes all those dangers and Mischiefs, whatsoever they be, that are expressed by—*being guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ our Saviour—eating and drinking our own Damnation—not considering the Lord's Body—kindling God's Wrath against us—and provoking him to plague us with diverse Diseases, and sundry kinds of Death.* These are hard things, all of them, and some of them hard to be understood; but whatever they signify, however grievous and hazardous they are to the Souls and Bodies of Men—they are all avoided and escaped, by coming *worthily*, that is, by Faith in Christ's Merits, and repenting of our Sins. And therefore, if there were a thousand more such terrible Expressions, (as I could wish there were fewer than there are) let them not frighten you, or give you any Trouble. *Repent*, and *believe*, and all is well. When this and the next Exhortation are ended, you come to the *Confession of Sins*, in which you must join with the Minister, both in Heart and Voice, for you are much concerned in it; but when the *Absolution* (which is next to it) begins, then hold your Peace, and attend to the Minister with all your Heart; the Custom is, in some Places, for the People to say a soft *Amen*, at the end of every Sentence, and there is nothing indecent in that Practice. But for any one to repeat the *Absolution*, word for word, with the Minister, is so absurd, and shews such Ignorance, that one would wonder any one should fall into that Pra-

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Notice: *Absolution* is the Work of God's *Minister*, and belongs to him, *alone*, in God's Name. The *Peoples* part is to be *silent*, and *attend*, and to say nothing but a most earnest *Amen* to that excellent Prayer. And, pray, believe me, once for all, that nothing fixes the Attention like Silence; and let me warn you to observe, in all your Publick Prayers, that you join with the Minister where you are bid, and at all other times be *silent*; attend and make it your own, by saying a hearty *Amen*. The observing Order and Decency, in Prayers, tends much to Edification; whereas the contrary begets Distraction, and disturbs both your self and your Neighbour; it offends devout and understanding People mightily, to hear Men and Women say their Prayers absurdly and indecently, holding their Tongues where they should speak and join, and joining with the Minister aloud, where they should only hearken, and say, *Amen*; but what can be more improper, than to hear them promiscuously *absolve* themselves and one another, and taking the Priestly Office on them, in a part of it, which is one of the most distinguishing he has? When the *Absolution* is over, attend most diligently to the *Sentences of Scripture* which the Minister is to read; and when he bids you *lift up your Heart to God*, you must be sure not only to do it in word, but in deed and great earnest. When the Prayer of Consecration is over (and not before) you will have some time before the Bread and Wine are brought to you, which you must employ as well as you can, either in Prayer or reading something proper to meditate on, on that occasion; and to this purpose, you may furnish your self out of some good Book of Devotion. But be not much discouraged if you cannot fill up all that space with regular Devotion, or with intense Meditation; do as well as you can, remember your own Offences with as much Sorrow as you can, and the Mercies of God to you in Jesus Christ, with as much Love, and joy, and gratitude; resolve in earnest to a-

m nd

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mend in what Particulars you find your self most faulty; and ask of God the Grace and Power, to put these good Resolves in execution; and that the Merits of this saving Sacrifice which you are now commemorating, may be extended and applied to you, in the Forgiveness of you Sins, and all other Benefits of Christ's Passion. Recommend to God's Mercy your Parents, and Relations, Friends, and all the World: Do any thing that is good and proper to fill up the time, and employ your Thoughts, till the Minister come to you, to give you the consecrated Bread and Wine.

*Par.* And then, I suppose, you would have me raise my Devotion to the highest pitch I can?

*Min.* Yes, I would have you very intent upon what you are about: But take good heed, lest, while you are striving to raise your Heart, you be not lost and bewildred. Strive rather for a serious and compos'd Mind; let your Devotion be rather *regular* and *equal*, than *exalted* and *transported*: Attend gravely to what the Minister says; and when he has repeated that excellent Prayer—*The Body of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee, preservet by Body and Soul to everlasting life*—be sure you say softly a most hearty *Amen*. For, is not that the thing you come for, and desire? When he has said—*Take, and eat this, in Remembrance that Christ died for thee, and feed on him in thy Heart by Faith, with Thanks-giving*—take it, and whilst you are eating it, make some such Prayer as this—*Grant, O Lord, that the Sense of this thy infinite Mercy, shew'd to Man in so much Misery, may never depart from my Mind! Let me, from henceforth, die to all my Sins, and my corrupt Affections, and live alone to Righteousness and Virtue! I steadfastly believe thou diedst upon the Cross, to save me from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin, O give me but the Grace to walk with a thankful, honest Heart before thee! Accept of my imperfect Sorrow and Repentance, imperfect Faith, imperfect Resolutions, and let the precious Merits*



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of my Lord supply the rest, and make up what thou seest is wanting! When the Minister delivers the Cup, and says—*The Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was shed for thee, preserve thy Body and Soul to Everlasting Life*—be sure you say *Amen*, for there it is most proper, and there it was formerly placed. When he has said—*Drink this, in Remembrance that Christ's Blood was shed for thee, and be thankful*—take it, and drink very moderately, regarding neither Thirst nor Pleasure, in that Draught. And after you have done, you may make some such short Prayer, as you did after the Bread—*O let my Soul be washed and cleansed in the Blood of Jesus, that was shed for me! and let me never be unmindful of this Mercy, but give thee thanks, not only with my Lips, but Life, by giving up myself to thy Service, and walking before thee in Holiness and Righteousness all my days, through Jesus Christ my Lord, to whom, with thee, O Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all Honour and Glory, now and for ever!* But let me remind you, that you do not pretend to repeat either aloud or softly, the Words which the Minister uses, in delivering the Bread and Wine; your Business is to attend soberly to what he says, and to say *Amen*. I tell you this, because an idle Custom has prevail'd, of Peoples repeating what the Priest says; to the disturbance of the Priest, and to the hindrance, I dare say, of their own Devotion, which would be further'd by a grave and silent Attention; which I take all occasions to recommend to you. And that your Mind may be employed, whilst the rest are communicating, you will choose to say some good Prayers, or read some short Discourse, seasonable, and proper; and if that do not hold out to the end, you may listen to the Minister delivering the Bread and Wine to the Communicants, and say a hearty *Amen* to each of them; for that is praying for the greatest Blessing God can bestow upon them—the *Preservation of their Body and Soul to Everlasting Life*. And when all have

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have received, and the Minister returns to his Prayers, be sure you be not unready to join with him ; nay, though you should not have ended your private Devotions, yet break them off, tho' in the middle, and join with the Publick ones, for that is better, and your Duty ; and so go on with him, in heart, till he have made an end. After which, you will, in a short Ejaculation, ask of God the Forgiveness of all your Coldness, Wandring, and Indifference, or worse Thoughts, during the whole Performance ; beseeching him to preserve in you a lively Sense of his Infinite Mercies shewn to Man in Christ Jesus, and that you may go home more and more confirm'd in Virtue and holy Resolutions, and abide in his Favour to your Live's end.

*Par.* I thank you, Sir, for your Care in thus preparing and conducting me, from the beginning of this Solemn Performance to the end of it ; and in particular, for those hints of things, that to wiser People may appear little, and needless, but to me, useful, orderly, and tending to Edification, if I rightly observe them. When all is over, I suppose, I shall return home mighty well satisfied, full of Unction, Joy, and holy Consolation, assur'd of God's Favour, the Forgiveness of my Sins, and everlasting Happiness.

*Min.* It may be not : One may *be* in God's Favour, without being *assured* of it ; one may have his Sins forgiven, without knowing or believing it ; and one may be (in the purpose of God) everlastingly happy in the World to come, and yet be miserable and desponding here. These things, I think, we have already spoken to, and agreed in them. In this you may be fully satisfied, that if you truly repent you of your Sins, they shall certainly be forgiven ; and you shall certainly be happy ; but that is in the World to come ; and whether you shall have the Comfort of believing your Sins forgiven, at such a certain time, *at*, or *after* the receiving the Sacrament, is not quite so sure. No such Joy, or Consolation is annexed, by any Promise of God, to the worthy Reception of the blessed Sacrament ; the Benefits are indeed secured by God's Promise to the worthy Receiver, from whence that Joy may reasonably result ; but the Party may, by some Indisposition of Mind, not be filled with it ; and let me now advise you not to expect, or depend upon any such unusual Lightsomeness or Consolations ; but if they follow, it is well ; if not, there is no Harm or Danger in the Want of them. Prepare your self by true and sincere Repentance, and come with Faith, and as well disposed as you can, and leave the rest to God ; you will have the Satisfaction

of having done your Duty in the best manner you could, and with that you must be content, for the rest is not in your power. I have known many good People disconsolate upon this occasion, by being disappointed of such Expectations as their own warm Imagination had only raised in them, without any Reason, or Promise made on God's part. They came away cold, and little affected, from the Sacrament, and thought their Hearts might have been fill'd with devout Transports; and because of this, they fell into deep Concern, and believed they had not prepared themselves as they ought to have done, although upon examining their Hearts they could not justly charge themselves with any considerable Omissions, or Negligence in that Work. And therefore be not discouraged, if you find not that Content and Pleasure after your coming from the Sacrament, which you may hope, and wish for, before. Go on steadily in the ways of Virtue, and do your Christian Duties constantly, and whether you feel the sensible Warmths and Comforts of Religion or no, yet you shall never want, at length, the just Rewards of it; *those* depend upon Uncertainties, *these* upon God's Goodness and Truth, which cannot fail.

*Par.* How oft, Sir, do you think it necessary for me to come to the Sacrament?

*Min.* No body can answer that Question better than your self; you must consider where you live, and what Opportunities you have of doing it, and what Reasons you shall have, not to communicate, where you have Opportunity. But be not, however, very scrupulous in the matter; do not think you offend God, if you do not lay hold of every opportunity offered you, by the Place you live in; nor think it sufficient, that you communicate thrice a Year, (as the Law requires) when you may do it every *First Sunday* in the Month, according to the Custom of the City where you live. Fail not to observe the Law of the Land; and be sure to have regard to the Custom of the Place; and think upon the Advantages of serving God, and coming to this holy Ordinance, and then your Piety and Discretion will direct you, how oft you are to communicate; let not *little* Occasions hinder you, nor *great* ones please you; do not look upon it as a frightful or dangerous Duty, but easy, safe, and beneficial. And I give you these Cautions now, that you may begin with right Apprehensions of the matter; for the first Impressions generally last, and People go on, and end, much as they enter on this Duty.

*Par.* I thank you, Sir, for this Warning, and good advice which I will make the best Use I can of: But I wonder

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much to hear you tell me, that this is not a frightful or hazardous Duty, when the Communion-Service is so full of dreadful and amazing Threatnings, that I have known both understanding and religious People much discouraged and perplexed by them. We are told in the Second Exhortation, that *the Danger is great, if we Receive unworthily, even eating and drinking our own Damnation.* And in the First—that *to come unworthily, is but thereby to increase our Damnation*—and that *the Devil will enter into us, and fill us full of all Iniquities, and bring us to Destruction both of Body and Soul.* There is hardly any thing able to support a Man's Spirit under such Apprehensions. I suppose these things are all of them exactly true, and not Exaggerations: And if they be, I leave you to consider, whether a Man may not as well venture *not to come to the Sacrament*, as venture the hazards of coming *unworthily*, and thereby increase his Damnation.

*Min.* Remember (what I have observ'd before) that to come *unworthily*, is to come without any Repentance or Sorrow for past Offences, and without any Resolutions of Amendment for the future. And such a coming as this, must necessarily increase a Man's Damnation; because he does apparently despise his Saviour, and insult his Holy Ordinance, the whole Design of which, and almost every Word of which, supposes Sorrow for his Sins past, and Purposes of Amendment for the time to come. 'Tis almost like a *Jew's* coming to be baptiz'd, who hates Christianity in his Heart, and intends to affront that Sacrament, but comes to serve some secular Interest and End: Or if he come not with Contempt and Malice, yet he makes a most solemn Profession of a great many Promises, none of which he has any design of keeping. Now such a one must certainly be in a worse Condition than if he had never been baptiz'd; and his Baptism must certainly increase his Damnation. And must it not be the same with those who come to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and there pretend most solemnly to repent and be sorry for their Sins past, and to vow all holy Obedience for the future, and yet do neither, but purpose to continue in their grievous Sins? Or if they do not positively purpose to continue in their Sins, yet have they no Intention to leave them. Such coming must unavoidably increase Damnation; because here is a new and most provoking Sin, of mocking Christ's Or-

Finance, added to his old Impenitence. But truly, I believe as well as hope, that not one Sinner in a hundred thousand comes to the Sacrament, without a general Repentance, and some sort of Resolution of forsaking his Sins, tho' it be faint, and loose, and ineffectual. And of such, I know not how to conclude, that they thereby increase their Damnation, any otherwise than they, who without coming to the Sacrament, make such kinds of Resolutions frequently, and yet forget and break them, may be said also to increase their Damnation; since every new Sin does certainly add to our Misery, and more and more endanger our Souls. I will therefore yield to you, that *to come unworthily*, is a greater venture, than *to stay away*; if by *Unworthily*, you mean a positive Intention not to leave your Sins, but still to continue in them. But if by *Unworthily* you mean such a Repentance, and Resolution of leaving Sin, as, tho' when it is made, is hearty and sincere, yet afterwards proves ineffectual; then I will not yield, that *to come Unworthily* is more dangerous than *to stay away*; because the breaking a good Resolution (not intended to be broken when it is made) is not a greater Offence, than not to make that Resolution, altho' you were obliged to make it. *Caius*, a great Squanderer, owed me a hundred Crowns, and upon my demand, promis'd to pay that Sum, at six Months end, according to his Obligation; the Day came, but not my Debtor; for tho' when he made that Promise, he was in great earnest, and seriously intended to take up, and discharge himself, yet he fell into his old loose courses, and was thereby disabled from approving himself an honest Man. *Titius*, another Squanderer as great as he, owed me the like Sum, under the like Obligation, but when I called upon him, made me no Answer, affirming afterwards that he would not Promise, because he intended not to leave his ill Courses, which would certainly disable him from paying his Debt. Am I more obliged to *Titius*, for not promising, because he intended not to perform, than to *Caius* for promising, and intending to perform, altho' he did not indeed perform? Do I owe him more Favour, who refuses to promise what he is in reason obliged to promise, and in Justice to perform; than I owe to him, who promises in good earnest, and intends at that time to perform, tho' afterwards he forgets and fails? Put these two Men under equal Obligations, and equal Abilities of discharging them, and you will see, to which of them most Kindness is owing from the Creditor. To promise,



with a purpose of not paying, is to deceive me, and abuse me, but to promise, with a purpose of paying, tho' he do not pay, is only to disappoint me. I say therefore (to make a short Application) that to come to the Sacrament, with a general sorrow and Concern for Sins past, and a general Resolution to live better for the time to come, altho' Men afterwards fall in to Sin again, and forget their good Resolutions, is not a worse and more hazardous thing, than to stay away from the Sacrament, without any Repentance at all of past Sins, or any Resolutions of living better, but going on still in their old course of Wickedness. If it were indeed a voluntary thing, and left at Peoples liberty, whether they would come to the Sacrament, or stay away, then it were safer not to come. But since it is a Duty laid upon Men by Christ's Command, and all Men are obliged to come, by virtue of the Obedience they owe to their Saviour, I can see no safety in refusing to come; and this refusing to qualify themselves and come, must as certainly increase their Damnation, as coming less qualified than they ought to be. I would not encourage any one to come Unworthily, i. e. without Repentance, without Resolutions of Amendment, without Faith, and without Charity, for certainly such coming must be hazardous. But I can see as much hazard in disobeying Christ, in refusing to come as he commands, because Men live (and still resolve to live) without Repentance, without Resolutions of Amendment, without Faith, and without Charity. In a word, there is no safety but in Repentance and Obedience, both of which, by the Grace of God, are in every Christian's Power. And to that Grace I leave you; beseeching him, who is the Author of that, and every other good and perfect Gift, to bestow them in such measure on us all, that we may most religiously discharge both this, and every other Christian Duty, in the manner that we ought, to the Glory of his Great Name, and the Salvation of all our Souls in the Day of our Lord Jesus.

F I N I S.



**T**HE Principles of Religion explain'd and prov'd from the Scriptures. For the Instruction of the Weak and Ignorant, and for their greater Improvement and profiting by Sermons.

